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Weinberger: MX rejection would peril world peace

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WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger says that if Congress rejects the \$28.4 billion "dense-pack" MX missile system, it will have "greatly endangered the freedom and the peace and the safety of the world" because the United States will be without a survivable land-based retaliatory nuclear force.

"The point is this system can survive in sufficient numbers and with sufficient retaliatory capability to inflict the kind of damage that will deter the Soviets from making any sort of attack," Weinberger said in an interview last week after President Reagan's announcement of his decision to deploy the MX system in Wyoming.

He added that the United States is vulnerable to Soviet attack "right now" in both strategic and intermediate-range nuclear weapons. Disclosing a new figure, he charged that the Kremlin has already deployed "in excess of 340" SS-20s, each with three warheads, most aimed at Western Europe.

But Weinberger also admitted that "it is quite possible" for the Soviet Union "to counter this (MX) field" by developing larger and more accurate offensive intercontinental ballistic missile systems.

But he said the United States must still build the \$28.4 billion system.

"As soon as we see that is what they're doing," Weinberger said, "we are able to add counters that continue the survivability of this field. For example, we could go to some more deceptive basing. We could also protect it with ballistic missile defense."

"We're working constantly to develop better forms of ballistic missile defense because ultimately that's another of the solutions — a system which can destroy their missiles before they get into the atmosphere and remove all of those effects."

But Weinberger admitted that "I don't think any ground-based system can be invulnerable (to attack) with the accuracy we can now obtain and the Soviets (already) have. But it has to be there and capable of sufficient survivability so we will be able to put in a retaliatory thrust."

Weinberger disclosed that Reagan

commented before going on nationwide television Monday night that "If we don't get this thing, we might as well bring our negotiators home from Geneva."

Weinberger noted: "That's not said in any other sense than in a very realistic appraisal of what would happen if Congress did turn it (the missile system) down." He said, "We'd bring them (the negotiators) home because there'd probably be nobody left in Geneva for them to talk to."

The Soviets, he said, "would have no incentive whatever to continue with negotiations if they know we're not going to modernize, strengthen and regain an effective deterrent." Nor will Moscow have any incentive to make reductions "if we do not get a system that bridges the gap."

He said the Soviet Union continues to build and deploy its most advanced intermediate-range nuclear weapon, the SS-20. When the separate Geneva talks on intermediate-range missiles began, the Kremlin had deployed 300. Weinberger said 324 "was the very latest they had deployed and ready to do."

"But they are working on two new sites and those two new sites will take them to over 340," he said. "That's why it's hard to give you a precise figure as of this morning." Meanwhile, "the score has remained zero on the Western side all this time."

Weinberger added that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization needs to deploy the new generation of 562 American cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe beginning late next year before Moscow will begin to negotiate in earnest. He said Reagan's proposal to reduce all such weapons to zero remains on the table.

The "window of vulnerability" for the United States exists for both strategic and theater nuclear weapons, in land-based, submarine-based and strategic bomber systems.

"The problem," he explained, "is that because of technologies that we have given them or that they have stolen, they have the degree of accuracy that now makes our ground-launched ICBM system extremely vulnerable to a first strike that could take out most of our ground-based missiles."

Weinberger said that the whole rationale for the "dense-pack" MX basing is that "after a first strike we have to be perceived by them as being able to inflict damage they would find so unacceptable high that they wouldn't launch that first strike at all."

The conventional wisdom used to be that while the Soviets could inflict more damage with their heavier, bigger bombs, the United States had much greater accuracy and therefore

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Syrian planes over the Bekaa in eastern Lebanon. The plane carried electronic devices developed by Israel.

According to Mr. Perle, the Israeli Air Force mounted a strike to destroy the plane on the ground. When the pilots arrived over the wreckage, they saw "Russians on the ground pulling out pieces," Mr. Perle said, adding that the Israelis then "got the Russians" along with the plane on the ground.

Today Mr. Perle was at an Atlantic alliance meeting in Brussels, where a "senior defense official" said that Israeli pilots had wiped out the Russians as they examined the wreckage of the Israeli plane.

didn't have to match the Soviets bomb-for-bomb.

"That was true over the years, but it is not true now," Weinberger said.

U.S. nuclear submarine and air defenses also are lagging dangerously, he said. "Our subs don't have the accuracy or throwweight or yield to take out the Soviet targets which have been hardened," Weinberger said. So the United States cannot rely solely on its more sophisticated submarine and bomber force.

"The Soviets have spent a lot of time hardening their targets so we don't have at this point" the capability to rely on them, though "we will by 1989 have the D-5 missile and the larger submarine and it will be able to inflict this kind of damage on Soviet hardened targets," the defense chief said.

As far as air defenses are concerned, "our B-52s, which are 20-25 years old, will not be able to penetrate Soviet air defenses for more than another year or two." The first 16 B-52s armed with nuclear-tipped cruise missiles become operational this week.

"They will give us the capability of standing off and hitting certain targets but not the immediate retaliatory strength needed to preserve deterrence," Weinberger said.

World peace will be jeopardized if Congress says no to the MX deployment, Weinberger said. "It is essential that we go with the MX decision all the way," Weinberger said, if the United States is going to maintain the deterrent shield it has always provided for the Free World and if arms talks are to succeed.

"You get peace two ways," he said, "and I think they are inextricably linked. One is through deterrence. The other is through genuine and effective arms reductions. I don't think you can get one without the other, and I don't think you can have peace without both."

"If Congress turns it (MX) down, all I can say is that they would have greatly endangered the freedom and the peace and the safety of the world."